THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

PROVED FROM HIS OWN DECLARATIONS ATTESTED AND INTERPRETED BY HIS LIVING WITNESSES, THE JEWS.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. PETER'S, FEBRUARY XXVIII, MDCCXC.

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AT the request of some much respected friends of the Author, the following Sermon is presented to the public. He has undertaken in it to prove, what indeed has often been proved before; and to support from the Scriptures the belief of what there is the best evidence for asserting has always been believed in all ages of the Church, and the best grounds for thinking will continue to be believed, by infinitely the greater part of those, who study the Scriptures seriously and without prejudice; whatever unbelievers may think, or may wish others to think, of the progress of their opinions.—Yet any attempt to prove the divinity of Christ may not be thought unseasonable at a time, when unbelievers charge the Church of England with Idolatry for her admission of this doctrine, accuse her ministers, of insincerity for conforming to it contrary to their

conviction, and conſider ſuch "*Corruptions* "*of Chriſtianity*" *as juſtifiable reaſons for their utmoſt endeavours to demoliſh the ſyſtem, which ſupports them.*

It is in vain perhaps to promiſe novelty of proof on a ſubject ſo often diſcuſſed by believers and unbelievers: yet I am not aware, that the argument for Chriſt's divinity, as ſtated in the following diſcourſe, and reſting on "Chriſt's "own declarations atteſted and interpreted "by his living witneſſes the Jews," *has ever been urged as the great fundamental proof of the divinity of Chriſt. But whether it be new or old, it ſeems to have the following advantages. Chriſt's own declarations of his divinity afford to common underſtandings more plain and tangible evidence than that of Prophecy; and more complete than the evidence of Miracles: and when atteſted by his enemies as well as diſciples, who heard them, and by the events, which followed from them, they appear to be ſuſceptible of but one meaning, and conſequently to be free from the ambiguities, which are ſometimes imputed to Scripture language.*

The object therefore of the diſcourſe is to recall the attention of the reader to the firſt

period of hiſtorical evidence on the ſubject, viz. Chriſt's own declarations atteſted and interpreted by his living witneſſes, the Jews:—to point out the principal cauſes, which have contributed to produce the difference of opinions concerning the perſon of Chriſt:—and the conſequences of one of thoſe cauſes as they affect the Chriſtian faith and the national Church:—and laſtly to urge the ſtudy of the Scriptures, and of the great principles of Chriſtian faith derived from them, and profeſſed by the Church of England, as the beſt means of ſecuring the purity of the Chriſtian faith, and affection to the national eſtabliſhment.

To the Sermon are added ſome Notes *for the purpoſe of purſuing rather more in detail, than the Diſcourſe itſelf would admit, ſome of the leading circumſtances of our Saviour's teſtimony of himſelf; and to illuſtrate ſome reflections.*

OXFORD, MAY, 1790.

It would have been eaſy to add to the Notes many other direct and collateral arguments for our Saviour's divinity, than are given in

the Sermon or the Notes. But the Sermon was not intended to include all the views of this copious ſubject, nor all the proofs of the one, which has been ſelected. I will for the preſent only obſerve, that the argument for Chriſt's divinity founded on his teſtimony does not reſt on the meaning of the terms ιδιος, μονογενης, *&c. but on the appellation of the "Son of God," as* assumed by Chriſt himſelf, *and on certain* facts *in his hiſtory reſulting from theſe pretenſions. The terms mentioned are only ſubſidiary to the declaration, and the facts.*

I add, too, with a view to another objection, that the Jews, who accuſed Chriſt of calling God his own Father, *of* making himſelf God, *and* equal with God, *were indeed his avowed enemies; were blind, ignorant, prejudiced, and malignant witneſſes: but that the malicious intentions of the Jews do not leſſen the truth of a charge, which Chriſt himſelf confirmed at his trial, and for which he ſubmitted to be crucified.*

I beg further to add, in juſtice to myſelf, that what the preceding Advertiſement intimates of novelty *in the argument of the Sermon, did not mean that the charge of blaſ-*

phemy brought againſt our Saviour by the Jews, had never been uſed, *as a proof of our Saviour's declaration of his divinity, (for it has been adduced by moſt writers, who have gone at large into the ſubject) but that our Saviour's declaration of his divinity, ſo atteſted and confirmed, had never been uſed with all the evidence and effect, which it ſeemed capable of bearing; that is, that it had never been urged, as* " the fundamental " proof" *of this great doctrine, to which I conceive all other evidence to be ſubſervient.*

The more indeed I conſider the force of the Jewiſh teſtimony of our Saviour's declaration, connected with his own acknowledgements at his trial, the more I am convinced of its importance. Mr. WAKEFIELD *in the Preface to his Tranſlation of the New Teſtament, in which he has adverted to my Sermon, contents himſelf with ſelecting one citation (John* x. 33.) *from the argument, to which he has given an explanation, that has often been diſcuſſed and confuted. The reader may ſee a competent and perſpicuous refutation of* Mr. Wakefield's *interpretation of the paſſage, which is the ſame with Dr. Prieſtley's, in* " A Short " Defence of the Doctrine of the Divinity

" of Chriſt, with ſome Remarks on a late " Appeal to the ſerious and candid Profeſ- " ſors of Chriſtianity," (p. 20, 21. 51, 52. 2d ed. 1772) *attributed to an eminent Surgeon at Leeds.* Mr. Wakefield *in his objection to the malice of the Jews has miſtaken the ground on which my argument reſts; he forgets, that evidence may be both malicious and true; and has overlooked the proof of that truth in our Saviour's admiſſion and confirmation of the evidence.*

I cannot diſmiſs this Edition of my Sermon without aſſuring Mr. Wakefield, *that I will not neglect the invitation, which he has given me to diſcuſs his opinions; and that he ſhall find, in the proſecution of my ſubject, that I have not been an inattentive reader of what he has written on this important article of Chriſtianity.*

DURHAM, JULY, 1792.

JOHN III. 12.

IF I HAVE TOLD YOU EARTHLY THINGS, AND YE BELIEVE NOT, HOW SHALL YE BELIEVE, IF I TELL YOU OF HEAVENLY THINGS?

THE Religion of Chriſt is diſtinguiſhed from all others by the purity of its precepts, and the myſteries of its creed: by precepts, which divine benevolence alone coud have inſpired; by myſteries, which divine wiſdom only coud have revealed; by precepts, which, in the compariſon, ſurpaſs the moſt perfect ſyſtems of human wiſdom, and myſteries, which admit of no compariſon.*

* See NOTE I.—Unbelievers, who endeavour to impugn the doctrine of the Trinity by affirming that it was derived from the Heathen philoſophers, form very unwarranted concluſions from very defective compariſons. If the Heathen and Chriſtian doctrines were the ſame, it would not follow that the Chriſtian was derived from the Heathen. But they are eſſentially different. There are indeed ſometimes to be found in the writings of the ancient Philoſophers remarkable coincidences of language, which at firſt ſight may induce the reader to conclude that they were acquainted with the Chriſtian doctrine of the Trinity. When he finds in Seneca ſuch an enumeration, as

THE precepts of Chriſtianity are calculated not only to direct the courſe of our actions, but to

" ſive *Deus*, ſive *incorporalis ratio*, ſive *divinus ſpiri-*
" *tus*," it will probably remind him of the Chriſtian Trinity, the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Holy Spirit*. But he will be deceived, I think, if he conſiders the terms *Deus*, *incorporalis ratio*, and *divinus ſpiritus*, as equivalent to the three perſons of the Deity, or in any other light than as ſynonimous appellations. It is an inſtance of the πολυωνυμια of the Heathen deities applied to the ſupreme being of the Philoſophers. The paſſage to which I allude, is as follows: " Id actum eſt, mihi crede, ab illo, quiſquis
" formator univerſi fuit, ſive ille Deus eſt potens omnium,
" ſive incorporalis ratio, ingentium operum artifex, ſive
" divinus ſpiritus, per omnia maxima ac minima, æquali
" intentione diffuſus, ſive fatum, et immutabilis cauſarum
" inter ſe ſeries." *(Conſol. ad Helviam*, c. 8.) That is,---
" the creator of the univerſe, by whatever name we ad-
" dreſs him, whether it be *God*, or the *immaterial wiſ-*
" *dom*, or the *divine mind*, or *fate*, or *neceſſity*." " Fate"
and " neceſſity," as well as " God," the " immaterial wiſ-
" dom," and the " divine mind," are evidently appellations merely equivalent to " Him," who is the " creator
" of the univerſe." And ſo inſtead of a Trinity, a τριας, we have a πενλας, and nothing is left analogous to the Chriſtian doctrine, not even the reſemblance of number. This paſſage may ſerve as a rule in others, whether the number of ſynonimous appellations be three, or more or leſs than three; and is ſufficient to ſhew, that even coincidence of number will be no proof of identity of doctrine.—Thus far, at preſent, in deference to ſome very learned perſons, who have lately judged differently of this paſſage.

regulate the firſt movements of the mind. They condemn not only the commiſſion of ſin, but the wilful indulgence of every irregular thought. In the duties of benevolence, its precepts enlarge the limits of local and national affection, and extend it to all mankind: it is not only our friends, that we are commanded to love, our neighbours, or our countrymen; but we are directed to ſubdue the violence of natural antipathies, and love thoſe who hate us; to extinguiſh the rancour of enmity by patience, of envy by humility, of malignity by kindneſs.

The neceſſity of ſubmitting to the ſeveral duties of morality is ſo eſſentially interwoven with the general intereſts of ſociety, that he who deviates furtheſt from thoſe duties, will, in his moments of reflection, acknowledge, that his conduct is at variance with his reaſon. The duties of morality are binding on the common concerns of life; the force and value of its precepts are rendered palpable by every day's experience; and, what it is the concern of all to eſpouſe and to enforce, an individual will ſeldom have the hardineſs or the folly to diſpute.

§. 2. But while all men, from motives of ſelfiſh and temporary intereſt, concur in defining the li-

mits of moral duty, the cauſe of religious truth, it has been thought, may be ſafely truſted to the private judgement of every individual. How far the interpretation of religious doctrines, which, as ſubjects of controverſy, are connected with difficulties not ſuited to minds either unaſſiſted or perverted, may be ſafely left to ſo capricious a criterion, we may collect from thoſe diverſities of opinion, which are formed on ſubjects of every day's occurrence. But that we ought not to be thus indifferent about the ſtability of religious truth, we may judge more eſpecially, as Chriſtians and citizens, from the great importance of religious opinions, and their diſtinguiſhing circumſtances in different religions.

If religion be of importance to mankind, even in this life, the truth of religious opinions cannot be a matter of indifference to Society. If we believe the religious doctrines, which we profeſs, to be revealed from God, ſuch doctrines cannot be too anxiouſly protected from the errors of ſcepticiſm, * and the corruptions of infidel philoſophy: and the neceſſity for ſuch protection will always be in proportion to the remoteneſs of the doctrines from the limited conceptions and ordinary experience of mankind. God will no doubt provide for the good of his creatures, and the

* See Note II.

ſupport of true religion: we are aſſured that "the "gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it." But where miracles ceaſe, human means muſt operate, under providence, as the inſtruments of human happineſs. The bleſſings of life, and health, and truth, which God has beſtowed upon his creatures, they, as rational agents, muſt maintain by their beſt endeavours and proviſions.

THE importance of religious opinions * to mankind will be further evident, if we conſider, that the peculiarity of religious opinions conſtitutes the ſpecific difference of every religion. The followers of different religions are diſtinguiſhed, not by the tenets, which they poſſeſs in common, but by thoſe which they hold peculiar to themſelves. By ſuch diſtinctions the Jew is ſeparated from the Heathen, the Mahometan from both of them, and the Chriſtian from all.

THE Chriſtian ſays, "I believe Chriſtianity to "be true: and the records of this religion in the "New Teſtament I believe to be authentic." But what do thoſe records conſiſt of? of facts, moral precepts, and religious doctrines. To *practiſe* the precepts, is one part of Chriſtianity; to *believe* the

* See NOTE III.

facts and doctrines is another.—If he proceed to particulars, the Chriſtian ſays, " I believe that Je-
" ſus Chriſt, the founder of Chriſtianity, perform-
" ed ſuch great and notable miracles as prove his
" divine miſſion; that he clearly and expreſſly
" taught the reſurrection of the dead, and proved
" the truth of his doctrine by his own reſurrection;
" therefore, as I believe thoſe facts to be true, I be-
" lieve in the divine miſſion of Chriſt, and in the
" certainty of a future life." So far all, who are denominated Chriſtians, agree in their opinions of the truth of Chriſtianity.—But is this the *whole* truth? Are there no peculiar circumſtances in the life and perſonal character of Chriſt; in the object and end of his miſſion; in the merits of his conduct; and the extent of his authority; which diſtinguiſh him from all other great prophets, and every merely human delegates from God? Are there no injunctions relating to himſelf, to which he expected belief as a duty from his diſciples? Have we derived from the extraordinary circumſtances of his birth, from his many diſcourſes about himſelf and Him that ſent him, and from the ſubſequent inſtructions of his Apoſtles, no other knowledge of the divine nature, than what was known to mankind before the coming of our Saviour? In determining theſe queſtions a member of the Church of England differs in his religious opinions, or ra-

ther in his religious faith, much more from the Socinian, than the Socinian does from the diſciple of Mahomet.

If Chriſt had delivered only precepts of moral duty, however ſuperior in purity to the injunctions of the Moſaic law; if he had, in addition to that morality, only aſſured to us the certainty of a future life, great and important as is the doctrine; we might ſtill have ranked as Hebrews: the Phariſees believed the doctrine of the reſurrection. The characteriſtic articles of Chriſtianity we muſt collect from the doctrines of Redemption, Incarnation, Atonement, and Mediation.

By the credenda, then, of their faith, and not by precepts of morality, do different religions ſpecifically differ: their moral precepts may, in ſome degree, diſtinguiſh them from each other, but they are characterized by their religious tenets.

The importance of religious opinions is peculiarly obvious in this Country, and in the preſent day. It is the difference of religious opinions, which ſeparates from the Church, the moſt repugnant of her Sectaries. Where the ſame doctrine is conſidered by the Church, as of divine authority, and by her enemies, as Idolatrous, to know the

truth cannot be a matter of indifference to any Churchman. Where affection and attachment to a national Church depend, if not ſolely, yet principally, on the truth of the doctrines, which ſhe injoins, a clear conviction of the truth cannot be to any member of the eſtabliſhment a matter of indifference. Above all, it cannot but be a concern of the firſt importance to every ſerious Chriſtian, to be well perſuaded of thoſe doctrines, which conſtitute a diſciple of Chriſt.

§. 3. It is too obvious to be denied, that he cannot be a Chriſtian, a diſciple of Chriſt, who diſavows the doctrines inculcated by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. They who differ moſt in their religious opinions, muſt agree in this acknowledgement. Yet among thoſe, who are denominated Chriſtians, ſome moſt decidedly believe, what others as ſtrenuouſly deny; and yet all contend, that their doctrines are the doctrines of Chriſt. The Church of England injoins as neceſſary articles of faith, becauſe it believes them to be the doctrines of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, what the Socinian rejects as incredible, impoſſible, and unfounded in Scripture. Both cannot be right: to adhere to ſuch contradictory opinions muſt be, it ſhould ſeem, on one ſide or the other, the effect of great perverſeneſs or miſapprehenſion. It becomes therefore the ad-

herents of both perſuaſions to conſider well the grounds of the ſerious and important difference, which ſeparates them from each other: it becomes us as members of the national eſtabliſhment, and thoſe of us eſpecially, whoſe buſineſs it is to teach the doctrines of the Goſpel. If Jeſus Chriſt were a mere man, we are guilty of Idolatry in paying him divine worſhip; if Jeſus Chriſt were a mere man, we are guilty of a pernicious deluſion in preſſing upon others the belief of his divinity. But if Jeſus Chriſt was God as well as man;---if the Scriptures ſo declare him;---if his actions and declarations atteſt his divinity, and yet *we* deny it; whatever name the preſent boaſted liberality of ſentiment may allow us, we have no claim to the title of his diſciples; we cannot be Chriſtians.*

§. 4. In diſcuſſing queſtions of complicate enquiry, the difference of opinions has always been increaſed in proportion as the main queſtion has been enveloped in acceſſory and ſubordinate difficulties. Such adventitious ſubjects not only enlarge the ground of controverſy, but, by protracting the deciſion of the original ſubject, greatly contribute to embitter the conteſt between the advocates of different opinions. It becomes,

* See Note IV.

too, thus infinitely more difficult to decide on the whole of an inquiry. For while the field of inquiry is thus enlarged, and the conteſt is carried on at a diſtance from the chief ſource of the diſpute, there occur ſo many opportunities for ſophiſtry and evaſion, that the worſt cauſe will ſometimes aſſume an appearance of truth from the occaſional ſucceſs of particular arguments. It is therefore neceſſary for all, who would preſerve their minds undiſturbed by the arts of controverſial miſrepreſentation, to keep the main principles and facts, with the combined evidence of their truth, in view, while they endeavour to purſue ſubordinate difficulties through the intricacies of ſophiſtry and error. With the firm poſſeſſion of any one clear proof of the great articles of our Faith, if difficulties occur, they may create embarraſment, but will never excite doubt.

These reflections, the younger part of my audience, to whom they are addreſſed, will apply to the hiſtorical diſquiſitions concerning the Divinity of Jeſus Chriſt. No ſubject, perhaps, in its full extent involves more numerous difficulties. But theſe difficulties lie, not in the ſcriptural teſtimony itſelf, (for to an unprejudiced mind, as I hope to ſhew, nothing can be more expreſs,) but in the *authority*, which we adopt for eſtimating the teſtimony, or in our *criterion* of the doctrine atteſted.

If on any point of Scripture doctrine we desert the testimony of Scripture, and have recourse to the opinions and *authority* of the most learned writers subsequent to Christ and his Apostles, except as illustrations of the sacred text, we relinquish the only rule, which can ascertain the truth of their doctrines. So many are the difficulties, which arise from the fallibility of the human understanding, and the inconstancy of human judgement, that those valuable monuments of Christian antiquity, the writings of the Fathers, which form so useful and ornamental a part of Christian knowledge, have supplied the oppofers of Christ's divinity with materials of endless contention.

On the other hand, if on such subjects we make our own reason the *criterion* of the doctrine; if we suffer it to be the arbiter not only of the literal testimony of scripture, (which is its true province,) not only of what is revealed, but of the probability and improbability of the doctrine:---in other words, if we reject the letter of Scripture, because we cannot comprehend the doctrine, instead of admitting the doctrine, because we cannot contradict the letter:---if such be the interposition of our reason, all dispute about the Christian mysteries must be fruitless; for between the properties of finite and

infinite nature, there can be no common medium of compariſon.

THE teſtimony of Scripture, then, is the ſureſt and the moſt compendious evidence, and, after every other teſtimony, is ſtill indiſpenſable. For, if in what we conſider as revealed doctrines, we are not ſupported by the language of revelation, all acceſſory authority is unavailable.*

§. 5. BY thoſe, who are not prediſpoſed to conteſt the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity,† the expreſs declaration of his beloved Apoſtle, that he was that eternal and divine word, who was from the beginning not only with God, but was God, will be conſidered as an adequate proof of his divinity. The declarations, however, of Chriſt himſelf inter-

* See NOTE V.

† In the former edition I had mentioned the miraculous conception, as a proof of Chriſt's divinity. Upon reconſidering the ſubject, it does not appear, *in itſelf*, to amount to an adequate proof of his divinity, but is fully ſo of his *ſuperhumanity*. It ſerves indeed as an important link in the chain of argument for the *divinity* of Chriſt; for though it does not, *in itſelf*, prove this, it does in its connection with prophecy, by determining the event and application of certain predictions; and with our Saviour's declarations of himſelf.

preted by the *earlieſt teſtimony* concerning him, that can be brought, the teſtimony of his living witneſſes, the Jews, will be leſs liable to objection. Whatever difficulties may on other occaſions occur in the uſe of particular terms, the interpretation of the words of Chriſt by the evidence of his contemporaries and hearers, muſt free them from all ambiguity of meaning, and afford to the argument the full and expreſs authority of *hiſtorical evidence*. If therefore it can be made appear, that Chriſt called himſelf the Son of God, in the proper and literal ſenſe of theſe terms; that he avowedly declared himſelf to be God, and equally God with the Father; if theſe declarations can be proved from Scripture, unleſs we diſclaim the title of Chriſtians, we muſt believe in the divinity of Chriſt. For even thoſe, who are moſt violent in their rejection of Chriſt's divinity, believe him to have been a great prophet, inſpired by God, and conſequently incapable of falſhood. Chriſt's declarations muſt be true; we want only adequate authority to determine their expreſs meaning: and ſuch authority, for reaſons before mentioned, ſeems due to the atteſtations of the Jews.

THE earlieſt avowal, which Chriſt made, that he was the Son of God, was his anſwer to his Mother, and reputed Father, when, after much inquiry,

they found him in the *Temple.* "And when they "saw him, they were amazed: and his Mother said "unto him, Son, why haſt thou thus dealt with us? "Behold, thy Father and I have ſought thee ſor- "rowing. And he ſaid unto them, how is it "that ye ſought me? [*that ye knew not where to "find me?*] wiſt ye not that I muſt be in my "Father's houſe?"* that is, *the houſe of God*, the Temple. St. Luke, ii. 48.

In the courſe of the Goſpels there is a variety of paſſages, in which our Saviour applies the terms, *the Father*, *the Son*, to God and to himſelf, in ſo marked a relation to each other, that *Son of God* cannot be underſtood in the general ſenſe, in which *Sons of God* are ſometimes ſpoken of in Scripture. "As the Father hath life in himſelf, in the ſame "manner hath he given to the Son to have life in "himſelf.---Whatſoever the Father doeth, that the "Son doeth likewiſe.---No man knoweth, who "the Son is, but the Father." He calls himſelf God's own Son: (John v. 18.) and in language ſtill

* *In my Father's houſe.*] So ought εν τοις του πατρος μου δει ειναι to be tranſlated, inſtead of *about my Father's buſineſs*, as it is in the Engliſh Tranſlation. See Wetſtein's note on the paſſage, and Dr. Owen in Bowyer's Conjectures; alſo Pearce, Doddridge, Hammond.

more appropriate God's *only begotten Son.* "God "ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begot- "ten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould "not periſh, but have everlaſting life." (John iii. 16.) The *only begotten Son* are the moſt explicit terms, which in the imperfection of human language can be adopted to denote a Son conſubſtantial with the Father.

PROPHETS, and Saints, and holy Men, are in a ſpiritual and general ſenſe, called *Sons of God*, and *the Sons of God.* But no one was ever called in Scripture perſonally and individually *the Son* of God, beſide Jeſus Chriſt; except, perhaps, the firſt man, Adam; and no one, *the only begotten Son of God*, except Jeſus Chriſt alone.

IT ſhould be obſerved too, that the title of the "Son of God" did not originate in the reverence of his diſciples, but in Chriſt's own declarations. No great prophet of the old Covenant ever aſſumed to himſelf the title of "the Son of God." Their ſanctity and authority might juſtify others in calling them "Sons of God;" but no one before Jeſus Chriſt publiſhed his commiſſion from God, as the Son of God, and on that title founded his authority.

From the uniform application therefore of the relative Terms, *the Father* and *the Son*, to God and Jeſus Chriſt, in the paſſages quoted, and the apparent incongruity of the latter term to any human being in the ſame appropriate language, we are led to conclude, that our Saviour meant to declare himſelf the Son of God in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe. And that this was his meaning, we are further authorized to think by the Jews, who heard him, and the evidence of the events, which were the conſequences of theſe declarations. Thus the unbelieving Jews underſtood our Saviour to mean, when he called God his Father, conſidering the title of *the Son of God*, aſſumed by him, as implying divinity, and equality with the Father. "My Father, ſaid he, "worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the "Jews ſought the more to kill him, becauſe he not "only had broken the Sabbath, but ſaid alſo, that "God was his own Father, making himſelf *equal* "*with God.*" (John v. 17. 18.)*

On another occaſion our Saviour, perhaps, ſtill more expreſsly aſſerted his divinity, and conſubſtantiality with the Father, where he ſays, "I and my "Father are one." Thoſe who are unwilling to admit the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, ſay that theſe

* See Note VI.

words mean only that, " I and God have one pur-
" poſe to purſue, one end to accompliſh." But we may again appeal to the Jews, his living witneſſes, who accuſed him of blaſphemy, and were going to ſtone him. " Jeſus anſwered them, " Many good works have I ſhewn you from my " Father: for which of thoſe works do ye ſtone " me? The Jews anſwered him, ſaying, for a " good work we ſtone thee not: but for blaſphe-
" my, and becauſe that thou being a Man, *makeſt* " *thyſelf God.*" John x. 33.

THE laſt declaration, which Jeſus Chriſt made of his divinity, was that for which he was condemned to the Croſs; and the ampleſt teſtimony of the expreſs meaning of the declaration, is the ſentence pronounced on him, as a blaſphemer, for calling himſelf the Son of God. " The high Prieſt aſked " him, and ſaid unto him, art thou the Chriſt, *the* " *Son of the Bleſſed?* And Jeſus ſaid, *I am.* And " ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man ſitting on the right " hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of hea-
" ven. Then the high Prieſt rent his clothes, and " ſaith, what need we any further witneſſes? Ye " have heard the blaſphemy: what think ye? And " they all condemned him to be guilty of death." Mark xiv. 61—64.*

* See NOTE VII.

From the previous conduct of the Jews, Jesus Christ knew that they did not consider the title, which he assumed, as the title merely of a great Prophet; or in the general sense, in which they were accustomed to call all Men Sons of God, as the children of one common parent; for such title would not have been charged with blasphemy, that is, the presumptuous pretension of being God, and equal with God. He knew too that to assume this title at his trial, in the sense, in which they had before understood it, without correcting their mistake, if they had mistaken his meaning, must expose him to the last severities of their law. Yet at the time of his trial, in the last hours of his life, he did assume it in the most open and decided terms, which left in the mind of the high Priest no room to doubt of the blasphemy, of which Jesus Christ had been accused.*

From the authority, then, of Christ's own declarations, the attestations of the Jews, and the evidence of his death, it is clear that Jesus Christ professed himself to be *the Son of God*, in the proper and literal sense of those terms, and therefore God,—equal with God,—and one with God. And as Jesus Christ was incapable of falshood, it follows

* See Note VIII.

that he was truly God;—God, to whom are due our moſt devout and grateful adorations, as to him, by whom all things were *created*; to him, who has aſſured us that HE will always be *preſent with us* in the midſt of our devotions; to him, who has promiſed, that "if we aſk any thing in his name, HE "will do it." John xiv. 14.†

§. 6. This eternal and divine perſon, for the great purpoſes of Man's redemption, for the completion of that atonement, which was to be made for Man, took on himſelf the form of Man, and united the divine and human natures. No evidence is wanting to prove the humanity of Jeſus Chriſt. To prove the union of the two natures, is, perhaps, as unneceſſary after the evidence, which we poſſeſs of his divinity. If Chriſt's own teſtimony prove the exiſtence of one nature, his whole life, his ſufferings, and his death prove the other. But the expreſs declarations of our Saviour reſpecting his præexiſtence, his deſcent from heaven, his inviſible and divine nature diſtinct from his viſible and human, while they afford additional proofs of his divinity, point out in more explicit terms the union of the two natures.

†See NOTE IX.

When the Jews aſked our Saviour, "where is "thy Father? he anſwered, ye neither know me, "nor my Father. If ye had known me, ye ſhould "have known my Father alſo." On another occaſion, he ſaid, "No Man knoweth, who the Son "is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but "the Son." When he addreſſed theſe words to the Jews, who conſidered him as the Son of Joſeph, and before whom he had been accuſtomed to call God his Father, and himſelf the Son, he manifeſtly diſclaimed his reputed human Father, and referred to ſome inviſible nature diſtinct from his human perſon. It is clear from our Saviour's words, that the Father and the Son were equally unknown to Mankind, and conſequently, that the Son in his inviſible and eſſential nature, was equally divine with the Father. To the ſame præexiſtent and divine nature he referred, when he ſaid, "Ye are "from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this "world: I am not of this world.—I came down "from heaven.—No one hath aſcended into hea-"ven, except he that came down from heaven, "even the Son of Man, who is in heaven.—What "and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man aſcend up, "where he was before?—Verily, verily, I ſay unto "you, before Abraham was, I am.—Now, O Fa-"ther, glorify thou me with the glory, which I "had with thee, before the world was." Some of

theſe paſſages, when detached from their proper places in Scripture, or from each other, may appear, perhaps, ſuſceptible of other meanings: but when compared with each other, and eſpecially with the paſſages, in which Chriſt aſſerts his divinity, they can carry only one meaning, the præexiſtence of Chriſt, and the union in him of the divine and human nature.

§. 7. When in the ſame perſon are united two natures ſo diſſimilar in their attributes, ſo different in their functions, as the divine and the human, there muſt neceſſarily be as great a difference in the force of the expreſſions, which are applied, on different occaſions, to this perſon. With reſpect to theſe different natures, the Son of God will be both equal and unequal to his Father, will be one with God, and yet different from him: and though equally God with the Father in one capacity, in the other the ſame perſon will be both his Father and his God. Though it is as difficult for us to conceive the union of the divine and human nature in Jeſus Chriſt, as the union of immaterial and material nature in a mere Man, yet as we have the authority of Chriſt himſelf for the doctrine, if the belief of his doctrines conſtitutes the title of a Chriſtian, it is preſumption and impiety to diſſent; it is our duty as Chriſtians to believe.

Our Saviour's declarations of his præexiſtent and divine nature are ſo direct and poſitive, that their meaning cannot be evaded but by a latitude and perverſeneſs of interpretation, which would diſcredit the judgement of a Scholar in his explanation of any profane writer. The *meaning* of our Saviour's declaration, the Jews, who heard him, underſtood, as we do, who believe in Chriſt's divinity. But the hardneſs of their hearts, and the perverſeneſs of their underſtandings, prevented their *belief* of his teſtimony. They ſaid, "Is not this Jeſus, "the ſon of Joſeph, whoſe father and mother we "know; how is it then, that he ſaith, I came "down from heaven?" It was a hard ſaying, very hard to be believed by thoſe, who did not admit the authority of the Speaker: it gave offence even to many of his diſciples, who went back, and walked no more with him. It was one of thoſe hard ſayings, which they were not then able to bear; which they were to hear, but not to underſtand, till all things were compleated. But it was an expreſs and unambiguous ſaying, as appeared from its effects on his hearers. *They* underſtood the meaning of his declarations, but did not believe his teſtimony: *we* believe the teſtimony, becauſe it is *his* teſtimony; for he "knew, whence he came, and "whither he was to go: they knew not whence "he came, nor whither he was to go."

Upon the whole of this evidence of our Saviour's divinity it ſeems worthy of remark, that the doctrine of the divinity of Chriſt did not originate ni the reverence of his diſciples, but in his own declarations:—that theſe declarations were atteſted not only by the Evangeliſts, who record them, and believed them, but by his enemies, who diſbelieved them:—that the doctrine does not depend on a ſingle paſſage of Scripture, but on many paſſages;—not on diſputable terms, but on the evidence of hiſtorical facts;—and (if we deſcend from this period) not merely on the opinions of the day, but on the doctrines, religious diſcipline, and habits of nearly eighteen centuries.

§. 8. How this myſterious union of the divine and human natures in Jeſus Chriſt coud exiſt, it is impoſſible for human faculties to comprehend. It is ſufficient for us to know, that God has ſo revealed it in his Scriptures, and to bend, in humble and ſilent acquieſcence, to the revelation, which God has made.

To aſk, why God ſhould command us to believe, what it is impoſſible for us to comprehend, is to forget the very nature and end of a revealed religion. To aſk, why God did not make his revelation *more* expreſs, is to neglect the deciſive au-

thority of what is already expreſs, for difficulties, which contribute only to fruitleſs diſputation, and to the exerciſe of that pernicious vanity, which is diſpoſed to reject all opinions, which are received, and all authority, which is acknowledged and eſtabliſhed.

THE preſumption and folly of attempting to inveſtigate the *reaſons* of revealed myſteries, and of diſbelieving them, becauſe we are unable to find any relative analogies in the properties of finite matter, cannot be better expoſed, than in the forcible language of the book of Wiſdom: "For what "Man is he, that can know the counſel of God; "or who can think, what the will of the Lord is? "For the thoughts of mortal Men are miſerable, "and our devices are but uncertain.—Hardly do "we gueſs aright at the things, that are upon "earth, and with labour do we find the things, "that are before us: but the things, that are in "heaven, who hath ſearched out? And thy coun-"ſel, who hath known, except THOU give wiſ-"dom, and ſend thy holy ſpirit from above?"

II. BUT if the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity be ſo clear in its original teſtimonies, and ſo well ſupported by ancient and permanent belief, it may well be aſked, whence it has ariſen, that there has

been, and ſtill is, amongſt different ſects, ſo great a difference of opinions about the Chriſtian creed? For of thoſe, who call themſelves Chriſtians, there are many, who deny the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, and yet fully believe his divine miſſion.

§. 1. The divine origin of the Chriſtian religion is indeed one thing, and the divinity of its founder another; yet the mere difference of opinions tends as little to diſprove the divinity of the Founder, as the divine origin of his Religion. There are many cauſes for difference of opinions on all ſubjects, but eſpecially on the ſubject of religion, ſuch as *incapacity*, *inattention*, *prejudice*, and *vanity*, the vanity of miſdirected reaſon.

§. 2. Every mind has a *capacity* for truth, inaſmuch as every mind is capable of admitting the truth, and believing it. The ſublimeſt myſteries of the Chriſtian faith, how much ſoever they may exceed the meaſure of our conceptions, if we ſubmit to the teſtimony and authority of Scripture, demand our belief, without doing violence to our reaſon. The *incapacity* of an uneducated mind conſiſts not in the inability to receive truth, but in its incompetency, amongſt a variety of diſcordant opinions, to arrive at truth by regular deduction, to diſcover the fallacies of ſophiſtry and error, and

the ſubterfuges of defective argument.* A mind unprepared by education, unfortified by habits of reaſoning and diſcrimination, is too often incapable of adhering to its original perſuaſions, when expoſed to the ſeductions of Proſelytiſm, and the earneſt expoſtulations of Enthuſiaſm. It is this incapacity to diſcern the truth in oppoſite opinions, which renders improper all appeals to their judgement on diſputed doctrines. They are diſturbed by the contrariety or oppoſition of ſentiments and doctrines, which they are unable to appreciate: and are more eaſily impreſſed by a bold, groundleſs objection to received opinions, than ſuſceptible of the reaſoning, which ſupports them.

§. 3. Others are often miſled from the truth by difficulties and objections, which are of weight only becauſe they are not examined. Many, who are every way qualified to judge for themſelves, and who act with diſcernment in the ordinary concerns of life, are often precluded from the due uſe of their judgement in abſtract inquiries by occupations, which have no connexion with reſearches after truth. The honours, the riches, or pleaſures of this life, ſo occupy the attention, that too little of it is devoted to the ſtudy of religion, or employ-

* See Note X.

ed in eſtimating the reaſons of the faith, which they profeſs. This negligence ſometimes involves them in doubts; for if they poſſeſs not firmly the chief principles of their faith, and attend not to the connexion, which unites the ſeveral arguments in evidence of any religious truth, a thouſand difficulties occur, which they cannot ſolve. Doubts, which are eaſily raiſed by the moſt inattentive, are not removed without conſiderable exertion of the underſtanding: they ſink eaſily into the mind at one impreſſion; but often require a long ſeries of well connected proofs to diſperſe them. And while they neglect to ſearch for the ſolution of their difficulties, from doubts they paſs to incredulity. Their firſt difficulties are ultimately confirmed by the very exiſtence of thoſe difficulties. For how, ſay they, can it be ſuppoſed that God would deliver for the inſtruction of mankind abſtruſe doctrines, which the wiſeſt of Men cannot comprehend? or, would ſubject to doubts and diſputation, thoſe truths, in which is involved the eternal happineſs of mankind?

To theſe difficulties we may reply that the introduction of the Goſpel was *not* to change the *whole* nature of Man; it was not to deprive him of free will; it was not, againſt a man's own will, and without his own exertion, to eradicate the many

cauſes, which, in this ſtate of probation, act as obſtacles to the reception of truth. Can we wonder at the exiſtence of difficulties and diſſenſions, which Chriſt himſelf foreſaw and predicted? Can we wonder at the exiſtence of diſſenſions about articles of faith, when that, which is called the moſt enlightened period of Chriſtianity, has ſeen advanced the moſt oppoſite opinions about the firſt injunctions of natural and moral duty, about the plaineſt principles of right and wrong?

Such doubts, if indulged, would induce us to arraign the whole moral government of God. We might as well aſk, why God, by giving us the noble privilege of free agency, ſhould expoſe us to the commiſſion of Sin? why not rather by one perpetual miracle prevent the poſſibility of error?

But to ſuch difficulties there can be no iſſue: they are doubts, which it is as fruitleſs to raiſe, as it is preſumptuous to purſue. Such doubts and difficulties originate in the inattention and perverſeneſs of our own minds. Unleſs mankind were diveſted of free will, the conſtant agency of miracles themſelves would not protect them from the deluſions of prejudice and inattention. "They have "Moſes and the Prophets,"—they have Chriſt and his Apoſtles,—"if they will not hear them, nei-

"ther will they be perſuaded, though one roſe "from the dead." The Scriptures are a plain, intelligible rule for the direction of our faith, and the conduct of our lives. And if we were all to truſt to the ſimplicity and ſincerity of our firſt impreſſions in reading the Scriptures, no one would doubt of the divine origin of the Chriſtian religion, or the divinity of its Founder.

But the doctrines, which we collect from Scripture, ſuch as the doctrines of the Trinity, and the divinity of Chriſt, they ſay, are abſtruſe, ſpeculative, metaphyſical doctrines, which the wiſeſt of Men cannot comprehend.—They are certainly *incomprehenſible* to us; it is this very incomprehenſibility of the doctrines which rendered neceſſary the interpoſition of divine revelation; but they are not more ſo, than the univerſality of the divine preſence, or the union of two infinitely diſſimilar natures, material and immaterial, in Man: they are *ſpeculative* doctrines; for they include no articles of practical duty to our fellow-creatures; but as articles of belief, revealed to us by Chriſt, they are objects of intellectual and practical duty to God: they are *metaphyſical* doctrines; for they are not to be collected from any of the predicaments of body, any of the analogies of material and phyſical exiſtence; but though neceſſarily, to us, metaphy-

ſical and ſpeculative in their nature, and incomprehenſible in their modes, yet, as ſimple propoſitions of God's word, they are in themſelves neither difficult nor abſtruſe. If indeed we were left to collect the myſteries of divine Truth by laboured analyſis and recondite inveſtigation, they might juſtly be called abſtruſe and difficult: "they would "be hid from babes, and known only to the "wiſe and prudent:" and the proportions of divine knowledge would vary with the different degrees of intellectual capacity. But to *know* God, as he is *made known* to us by the Scriptures, requires only a mind properly regulated by a conſciouſneſs of its own imperfections. All abſtract inquiry into the nature and modes of the divine exiſtence is ſuperſeded by the authority of revelation. The ſcriptural declarations of the divine nature are preſented to us as facts, which depend on the teſtimony of him, who revealed them: and it is not required of us to be wiſe above what is written. The promiſes of Chriſt are bound by the ſimpleſt conditions addreſſed to the imperfection of our nature: "Believe, and thou ſhalt be ſaved."

§. 4. If inattention expoſe Men to ſeduction from the truth, prejudice retains them in error. The prejudice of *inveterate opinion* may equally affect thoſe who adhere to the truth, as thoſe who

have deviated from it. On one ſide it creates the bigotry of blind attachment, on the other, the bigotry of perverſe diſſent. Some men it induces to adhere to their old perſuaſions, without examining the grounds of oppoſite opinions; while others examine, ſtate, refute with partiality and miſrepreſentation. In diſcuſſing the opinions of their opponents, they ſelect the weaker arguments, which are to the whole only ſubordinate illuſtrations, and neglect the principal arguments, and the ſum of their combined evidence.

The prejudice of *ſelf-intereſt*, is equally powerful in its effects on the opinions and conduct of contending parties. If a ſenſe of ſelf-intereſt were ſufficient to induce the members of any eſtabliſhment to defend its doctrines againſt their better judgement, the ſame motive will act with at leaſt an equal impulſe on the conduct of diſſenters from it, and, in their wiſhes to ſubvert an eſtabliſhment, whoſe doctrines they condemn, and from whoſe emoluments they are debarred, will ſtimulate them to attack with groundleſs objections, and vilify with invidious invective, its doctrines and authority. To the influence of ſelf-intereſt in perverting the judgement muſt be added other powerful motives, which almoſt excluſively affect diſſenters from eſtabliſhments, the deſire of victory,

with the jealouſy of inferior numbers, and contracted privileges.

§. 5. But of all the ſources productive of diverſity in religious opinions, there is none more fruitful, than the vanity of that pernicious error, which conſiders human reaſon, as an adequate criterion of all truth, and deems all doctrines, which are above human reaſon, or contrary to it, to be impoſſible and untrue.---We cannot ſay that whatever is above our reaſon is impoſſible, becauſe there are ſo many things even in the operations of material nature, and the functions of animal life, which we know to exiſt, but which we cannot account for. We cannot ſay, that whatever is above human reaſon is contrary to human reaſon, becauſe of that which is above our reaſon, we have no adequate criterion: it is impoſſible to find in the properties of finite matter any common medium of compariſon to eſtimate the eſſential properties of an infinite being. On the ſame principle, we cannot ſay, that whatever is contrary to human reaſon is contrary to the ſupreme reaſon: it is abſurd to conclude from the limited powers of finite beings againſt the poſſibilities of omnipotence.

III. On the grounds of this error and its many fallacies, I forbear to enlarge: but it may not be

improper to point out ſome of its conſequences, which terminate in opinions and meaſures, which very materially affect not only the ſtability of our national Church, but the permanency of the Chriſtian faith.

§. 1. The miſapplication of human reaſon to ſubjects, to which its powers are incompetent, adds ſtrength and action, reciprocally, to that principle of vanity, which gives it birth, *an overweening opinion of our own judgement.* It diſpoſes us to undervalue the deliberate deciſions of the greateſt numbers, and the moſt acknowledged learning; to hazard the ſureſt evidences of experience on the iſſue of viſionary theories; to cenſure all concurrences againſt innovations, as combinations of iniquity and fraud; and to conſider the mere diſſent from general perſuaſions, as a proof of peculiar diſcernment and force of mind; and thus, more eſpecially, becomes an invincible obſtacle to the recognition and acknowledgement of error.

§. 2. One neceſſary conſequence of this vain pretenſion, is, that it induces its advocates to controvert even *the authority of Scripture*, where it does not accord with their own judgement. For though they profeſs to appeal to Scripture, and even ſolicit its authority, yet its teſtimonies, under ſuch circum-

ſtances, are evaded by the imputation of figurative expreſſion, or denied as interpolations in the copies, or rejected as deceptions of memory in the writer, or errors of inconcluſive reaſoning.*

§. 3. If the authority of Scripture is thus evaded, denied, rejected, it is no wonder, that another conſequence, and a very extenſive one in its effects, ſhould be to diſclaim *all human authority in matters of religion.* The advocates of this opinion avow the moſt inveterate averſion to all eſtabliſhed ordinances of public worſhip, to all the decencies and ſubordinations of Church government, and to all doctrines and creeds eſpouſed by an eſtabliſhed Church.† They conſider all reſtrictions, in any way annexed to the profeſſion of religious opinions, however contrary to the religion by law eſtabliſhed, as infringements of their civil rights; and, laſtly, deny in principle, what in their public conformities they acknowledge, the prerogative of civil ſupremacy in matters of religion.

§. 4. Another conſequence is the extenſion of *free-thinking* under the ſpecious terms of *liberality of ſentiment*, and *freedom of inquiry.* This freedom of inquiry has preſented to the public little more than

* See Note XI.

† See Note XII.

a ſeries of experiments on religion, and on the laws, the public guardians of religion. It has exhibited a ſpectacle very painful to all ſincere friends of religion and religious truth, (except the experimentaliſts themſelves,) the vain efforts of an active, powerful, but irregular mind, in its aberrations from one impiety to another, in the purſuit of truth; and, like the blind heathen governour, inquiring for the truth, though ſurrounded by its brightneſs.

It was uſual, we are told, with the experimentaliſts in Phyſics in the laſt age, to labour their experiments with the moſt diligent exactneſs, and to withold them from the public, till by frequently repeated trials and the moſt patient obſervation they had exhauſted all means to determine their phenomena. The practice of the preſent day is more communicative, becauſe, probably, it has been found, that in the free communication of *phyſical* experiments the public is much more benefited by diſſeminating principles of natural knowledge, and a love of philoſophical inquiry, than the reputation of individuals can ſuffer by precipitation or inaccuracy.

Unfortunately this ſpirit of *unlimited inquiry*, and *extemporaneous communication* has extended itſelf to the inveſtigation and diſcuſſion of divine truth,

for which the very nature of the ſubject rendered it unfit. The eſſential properties of an immaterial, infinite, incomprehenſible nature afford no ſcope to our obſervation, no encouragement to our inquiries, and no criterion for our judgement,---except the expreſs word of God. Mankind never coud have known the myſteries of true religion, but by revelation from God. For though our fears, our hopes, and our gratitude might have collected from the works of nature many ſtriking evidences of a ſuperior power and divine intelligence, yet how weak, how inconſtant, how corrupt our notions of the divine nature would have been, we may know from the hiſtory of religion amongſt the more enlightened nations of antiquity. The moſt extended communications of human experience, the utmoſt exertions of human genius, never coud have diſcovered the divine truths of Chriſtianity. But as the latent and inſcrutable nature of thoſe truths was ſuperior to all diſcovery, ſo has the knowledge, which we now poſſeſs of them by God's revelation, ſuperſeded all other enquiry. Our experiments can extend no further than the written evidences of that Revelation. As it was communicated to Man through the vehicle of human language, our perceptions of the revelation may be ſubject to the common imperfections of our nature, and may be impeded by the natural defects

of language. But if the difficulties, which either or both of theſe cauſes may produce, be ſufficient to make us doubtful, whether the doctrines, which enter into the common belief of Chriſtians, and the articles of our national religion, are ſo revealed in Scripture, it is incautious at leaſt to diſſeminate ſuch doubts, as ſubjects of polemical experiment, without producing the moſt deciſive proofs of error, that is, of deviation from ſcriptural authority, in the received doctrines: very diſreſpectful to the public to charge Them with miſtaken opinions without having any ſettled opinion of our own:* and very injurious to ſociety, by deſtroying many a good man's beſt bleſſing, his peace of mind, without affording him any conſolation for his loſs in the hopes of a more ſecure conſcience, and more permanent belief.

INNUMERABLE are the arts, which have been employed to prepare the way for the eaſier currency of what every believer in the divinity of Chriſt muſt conſider, as the moſt anti-chriſtian, impious opinions. Attempts have been made to reduce into one community all the different denominations of Men, who call themſelves Chriſtians. *Comprehenſive liturgies* have been formed, which baniſh from

* See NOTE XIII.

the language of its devotions all alluſions to obnoxious tenets. It is obvious to collect, what advantage ſuch comprehenſive forms would be to all, or many of thoſe, who diſſent from the national Church; but it is not eaſy to ſee, what benefit would thence ariſe to religion at large; or how ſuch worſhip can be thought more acceptable to God, than the ſincere devotions of ſeparate communions.

Or rather it is eaſy to ſee, that the injury to Chriſtianity would be very great by the irreparable loſs, which the inferior ranks of ſociety would ſuſtain by ſuch generalizing and comprehenſive modes of worſhip. All who believe in the divinity of our Saviour, in the efficacy of his death, and the merits of his atonement, would be deprived of the moſt powerful motives to the newneſs of a good life, and the beſt aſſured hopes of forgiveneſs for the ſins, negligences and ignorances of their paſt life: and would loſe at once the beſt human means of keeping them firm in the principles of the Chriſtian faith. For, debarred as they are by the laborious occupations of their lives from the frequent ſtudy of the Scriptures, the moſt effectual means of preventing, in them, the total oblivion of all religious and moral truth, peculiar to the Chriſtian

revelation, is, to unite in their devotions the principles of Chriſtian faith and moral duty.

Upon the ſame extended plan of religious communication, *comprehenſive ſchemes of religious education* have been recommended and eſtabliſhed, not indeed always with the ſame views, but, as it ſhould ſeem, with the ſame diſadvantages to the Chriſtian faith. There is certainly great appearance of charity in the motive for adopting ſuch a courſe of religious inſtruction, as ſhould comprehend the children of all denominations; and real charity no doubt has influenced the minds of many, who have acquieſced in ſuch propoſals. But it does not ſeem that the intereſts of religion, or the ſucceſs of parochial inſtruction, can be promoted by ſuch accommodations.

It may indeed be ſaid, that the Chriſtian myſteries are not comprehenſible to a Child.—No: nor to the moſt cultivated and enlarged underſtanding. Doctrines therefore which cannot be made comprehenſible to the utmoſt perfection of human reaſon, can never ſo well be taught as in the moſt docile ſtate of the mind, before it has acquired the preſumption of rejecting, whatever it does not comprehend.

And however great may be the difference in the religious opinions of different ſects, every individual muſt be convinced, that the doctrines, which he believes to be true, cannot be believed too early; and that what the general advantages of early education render neceſſary for all children, become doubly ſo in the education of the poor, who have ſo little time to learn at all, what they are eternally intereſted in knowing well.

§. 5. To facilitate the progreſs of their reformation in religious opinions, the advocates of free inquiry have recaſt the annals of Chriſtian Antiquity. The moſt defective repreſentations of Church Hiſtory* have been preſented to the public as pictures of primitive faith; while doctrines of Evangelical and Apoſtolical truth have been exhibited as Corruptions of Chriſtianity.—Indecent and violent attacks have been made on the national liturgy and Church; violent from their acrimony, and indecent both from their violence, and their contempt of ſubſiſting laws.—The moſt uncharitable aſperſions have been thrown on the miniſters of the Church for their conformity to her doctrines, and on all firm adherents to the eſtabliſhment.—Seditious ap-

* See Note XIV.

peals* have been made to the paſſions of the people to ſeduce them from the reſpect and benevolence, which they owe to their teachers in religion, and their reverence for the doctrines and ordinances of the national Church.

§. 6. Of this free-thinking, or liberality of ſentiment, in religion, one miſchievous effect is its tendency, by obliterating all diſtinctions of names, ſects, and doctrines, to produce an indifference for all religious opinions, which are not recognized by the religion of nature, and an averſion to all eſtabliſhed creeds, all preſcribed forms, and articles of communion. To abandon any one of thoſe doctrines, which we believe to be revealed from God by his Son, is not liberality of ſentiment, but deſertion of the croſs of Chriſt: to do this, that we may accommodate our faith to the opinions of unbelievers, is an accommodation, which, it is to be feared, no political expediency, no temporal advantages, no human motives can juſtify. Liberality of ſentiment in religion is that ſpirit of charity, which induces us, while we *contend earneſtly for the faith*, to think that others may hold religious opinions different from our own, without the influence

* See Note XV.

of worldly motives, without hypocriſy, without inſanity.*

§. 7. The prevalence of the principles before noticed would inevitably create diſaffection to the national Church, or indifference for its welfare; a diſregard for the laws intended for its protection, and a diſpoſition to promote, or admit civil innovations however inimical to its intereſts; intereſts, which by many analogies appear to be intimately connected with the proſperity of the whole national eſtabliſhment;† as the exiſting laws are with the preſervation of the eſſential articles of Chriſtianity.

When we are told therefore that the civil magiſtrate has no right to interfere in concerns of religion, that all religious opinions are matters of indifference to Society, and that all forms of religious communion and inſtruction ſhould be made ſo general and comprehenſive as to admit ſects of all denominations; if at the ſame time we reflect, that the admiſſion of ſuch principles is neceſſary to the completion of certain long projected, and long laboured innovations in our civil and religious conſtitution; we have every reaſon to conſider ſuch

* See Note XVI.

† See Note XVII.

principles as ſome of the trains, which communicate with that mine, which, we are told by the enemies of our Church themſelves, has been ſo long preparing for exploſion.

SEEING therefore that the eſſential truths of Chriſtianity are involved in the doctrines of the national Church ;---that the civil and the eccleſiaſtical conſtitution of this country reſt on the ſame political principles, participate the ſame political rights, and depend on the ſame laws for their protection : ---and ſeeing too that the principles before touched upon have ſome a remote, ſome an immediate tendency to ſubvert the national eſtabliſhment, and the eſſential articles of the Chriſtian faith :---the progreſs of ſuch principles cannot better be oppoſed than by a rational and firm attachment to the national Church, founded on a decided conviction of thoſe religious truths, which it profeſſes. That we may not therefore ſuffer ourſelves to be miſled by the doubts and prejudices, the ſophiſtical and partial objections of philoſophical unbelievers, let us keep ſteadily in view that weight of evidence, by which the ſacred writings are authenticated more amply and circumſtantially than any other ancient book. Let us protect our belief from the perplexity of ſubordinate difficulties, by imprinting on our minds thoſe clear and deciſive paſſages in the

ſacred writings, which contain the words of Chriſt himſelf, and the doctrines of our faith. Let them be "as ſigns on our hands, and frontlets between "our eyes." Let us reflect with humility on thoſe myſterious and awful revelations, which God has made known to us, and which our imperfect reaſon would have been unable by the light of nature to diſcover. Let us pray to God to preſerve our minds from the vanity of miſdirected and preſumptuous reaſon; from the deluſions of inattention, indifference and prejudice; and from that ſource of innumerable prejudices and errors, a ſpirit of oppoſition to every thing received, of reſiſtance to all authority, and repugnance to all eſtabliſhment.

BRITISH MUSEUM 1 MR 79

NOTES.

Ὑπο δοξοσοφιας ἱοινυν επηρμενοι, εριζονἱες διαἱελουσι, δηλοι γεγονοἱες, ὡς ἱου δοκειν μαλλον, ηπερ ἱον Φιλοσοφειν προνοουνἱαι· και πανἱα ὑπομενουσι, και πανἱα, Φασι, καλων κινουσι, καἰν ασεβειν, δια ἱο απισἱειν ἱαις γραφαις, μελλωσιν. Clemens Al. Strom. L. VII.

NOTES.

I.

PAG. 1. *myſteries, which admit of no compariſon*] This may be aſſerted without exception to what is called the Platonic doctrine of the Trinity. Plato's three principles, the αγαθον, the νους, and the ψυχη, the eſſential and actuating principles of the Univerſe, have no reſemblance to the Chriſtian doctrine of the Trinity, except in the circumſtance of *number*. They were conſidered as three diſtinct principles diffuſſed through the univerſe, and inſeparable from it, not as three perſons (or hypoſtaſes, or diſtinctions, or whatever other name human language may afford to denote what the human intellect cannot comprehend) in *one and the ſame God*. The νους and ψυχη are never ſaid to be coeſſential with the αγαθον, equal with the αγαθον, and one with the αγαθον. And yet theſe three important differences render the Platonic *triad* eſſentially unlike to the Chriſtian *trinity*.

II.

P. 4. *errors of ſcepticiſm, and corruptions of infidel philoſophy*] That genuine Philoſophy ſhould have any tendency to deſtroy religion, or corrupt our religious opinions, is impoſſible: but that ſome ſort of it, or ſome miſapplication of it, is capable of producing ſuch effects, we may aſſert on the authority of a Philoſopher himſelf. Dr. Prieſtley ſays (in the

Preface to his Letters to Mr. Burn, p. viii.) that "the "*greater part* of his philoſophical acquaintance ridicule his "belief of Chriſtianity." Dr. Prieſtley has many philoſophical acquaintance on the Continent, and it is to be hoped for the credit of our country, that *the greater part* is there.—In his note to this paſſage he ſays, that "when he was at "Paris, after a very free and ſerious converſation on the "ſubject of religion he was told by one of the company, "that he was the only perſon they had ever met with, of "whoſe underſtanding they had any opinion, who pretended "to believe Chriſtianity."—In the ſame note he ſays, that "a very ſincere Catholic prieſt hearing, that on all occaſions "he avowed his belief of Chriſtianity, embraced him with "tears literally running down his cheeks, ſaying that all, "who were called *philoſophers*, that he had met with before, "were *atheiſts*."

III.

P. 5, 6, &c.] An objector to the importance of religious opinions may ſay, that practical duties are *more* important than religious opinions. But it is a reflection like many others on ſimilar occaſions, totally foreign to the ſubject. It implies the denial of what is not denied. The importance of practical duties is not queſtioned, nor any compariſon attempted between the relative value of religious and moral duties. Whether faith or good works in a *Chriſtian* be more acceptable to God, is a queſtion of fruitleſs curioſity, if not of dangerous tendency. It is fruitleſs to inquire which of two acts of duty be the more acceptable, where both are indiſpenſable: and dangerous, it ſhould ſeem, to form compariſons of two indiſpenſable duties, where the preference of one tends to the depreciation of the other. But there is another defect in the reflection, which is, its

excluding religious belief, or faith, from the number of *practical* duties. To believe a doctrine revealed to us by God, is as much an act of practical duty to God, which we owe to the authority of Revelation, as Charity is a practical duty to our fellow creatures. Cowley says of Crashaw,

" His *faith*, perhaps, in some nice tenets might
" Be wrong; his *life* I'm sure, was in the right."

Pope in his imitation of this passage has gone beyond his original, as much in sentiment as in harmony:

" For modes of *faith* let graceless zealots fight,
" His can't be wrong, whose *life* is in the right."

which in plain prose amounts to this strange inconsequence: " he cannot neglect his duty to God, who fulfills his duty " to his neighbour; he cannot violate the first four com- " mandments of the decalogue, who keeps the other six." That such a sentiment should have imposed on the author and many others after him, is a striking proof of the force of harmony and contrast.---The Bishop of St. David's has discussed this subject most fully and forcibly in his late excellent Charge delivered at his primary visitation.---I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of adding to this note a passage from a late elegant and valuable publication *on the Religion of the Fashionable World*, which more than deserves all its popularity. " Christianity then must be embraced " entirely, if it be received at all. It must be taken with- " out mutilation, as a perfect scheme, in the way in which " it has pleased God to reveal it. It must be accepted, not " as exhibiting beautiful parts, but as presenting one consum- " mate whole, of which the perfection arises from cohe-

" rence and dependence, from relation and conſiſtency. Its " power will be weakened, and its energy deſtroyed, if every " caviller pulls out a pin, or obſtructs a ſpring, with the " preſumptuous view of new-modelling the divine work, " and making it go to his own mind. There is no breaking " this ſyſtem into portions, of which we are at liberty to " chooſe one, and reject another. There is no ſeparating " the evidences from the doctrines, the doctrines from the " precepts, belief from obedience, morality from piety, the " love of our neighbour from the love of God. If we pro- " feſs Chriſtianity at all, if we allow the divine author to be " indeed unto us " wiſdom and righteouſneſs," he muſt " be alſo " ſanctification and redemption."

" Chriſtianity, then, is aſſuredly ſomething more than a " mere ſet of rules; and piety, though it never pretended to " be the ſubſtitute for a good life, is indiſpenſably neceſſary " to its acceptance with God. The Goſpel never offers to " make religion ſuperſede morality, but every where clearly " proves that morality is not the whole of religion. Piety " is not only neceſſary as a *means*, but is itſelf a moſt im- " portant *end*. It is not only the beſt principle of moral " conduct, but is an indiſpenſable and abſolute duty in itſelf. " It is not only the higheſt motive to the practice of virtue, " but is a prior obligation; and abſolutely neceſſary, even " when detached from its immediate influence on practical " goodneſs. Religion will ſurvive all virtues, of which it " is the ſource; for we ſhall be living in the nobleſt exer- " ciſes of piety, when we ſhall have no objects on which to " exerciſe many human virtues. When there will be no " diſtreſs to be relieved, no injuries to be forgiven, no evil " habits to be ſubdued; there will be a Creator to be bleſſed " and adored, a Redeemer to be loved and praiſed."

IV.

P. 9. *If Jeſus Chriſt was God as well as man, if his actions and declarations atteſt his divinity, and yet we deny it,——we cannot be Chriſtians.*] Τοιουτους ειναι ανδρας, ὁμολογουντας ἑαυτους ειναι Χριστιανους, και τον ϛαυρωθεντα Ιησουν ὁμολογειν και Κυριον και Χριϛον, και μη τα εκεινου διδαγματα διδασκοντας, αλλα τα απο του της πλανης πνευματος. [Sic. R. Steph.]——Εισιν ουν και εγενοντο, ω φιλοι ανδρες, πολλοι οἱ αθεα και βλασφημα λεγειν και πραττειν ἐδιδαξαν, ἐν ονοματι του Ιησου προσελθοντες· και εισιν ὑφ' ἡμων απο της προσωνυμιας των ανδρων, ἐξ ὁυπερ ἑκαϛη διδαχη και γνωμη ἠρξατο· αλλοι γαρ κατ' αλλον τροπον βλασφημειν τον ποιητην των ὁλων, και τον ὑπ' αυτου προφητευομενον ἐλευσεσθαι Κριϛον, και τον Θεον Αβρααμ, και Ισαακ και Ιακωβ διδασκουσιν· ὡν ουδενι κοινωνουμεν, οἱ γνωριζοντες αθεους και ασεβεις, και αδικους και ανομους αυτους ὑπαρχοντας, και αντι του Ιησουν σεβειν, ονοματι μονον ὁμολογειν. Juſtin Martyr. Dial. C. Tryph. ed. Thirlb. p. 207. "There are ſome "Men, who call themſelves Chriſtians, and acknowledge "the crucified Jeſus as their Lord and Chriſt, yet teach "not his doctrines, but thoſe of the ſpirit of error.—There "are, and have been, many denominated Chriſtians, who "have taught their followers to deny God and blaſpheme "him in their words and actions; who derive their appel-"lations from the authors of their reſpective doctrines. "For the leaders of theſe ſects have each, in their different "ways, taught their followers to blaſpheme the maker of "the univerſe, and him, who by his prophets he had fore-"told ſhould come, THE CHRIST, *the God of Abraham,* "*Iſaac, and Jacob:* with whom we hold no communion, "knowing them to be diſhonourers of God and reli-"gion, and deſpiſers of the laws: who, inſtead of being "the worſhippers of Jeſus, are merely his nominal diſ-"ciples."

Dr. Prieſtley aſſerts (in his *Corruptions of Chriſtianity*) that "Juſtin Martyr, who maintains the præexiſtence of "Chriſt, is ſo far from calling the contrary opinion a "*hereſy*, that what he ſays on the ſubject is evidently an "apology for his own." (Vol. II. p. 486.) The reader will make his own comment on this paſſage compared with the ſentiments of Juſtin here quoted.—In excluding from the communion and proper appellation of Chriſtians, all who do not *worſhip* Chriſt, even the RACOVIAN Catechiſm concurs with Juſtin. "Quid vero ſentis de "iis hominibus, qui Chriſtum non invocant, nec ado-"randum cenſent?—PRORSUS NON ESSE CHRISTIANOS "SENTIO."—Dr. Prieſtley and Mr. Lindſey aſſert that divinity was not aſcribed to Chriſt before Juſtin: yet the Apoſtate Julian bears teſtimony to St. John's declaration that Jeſus was God; Τον γουν Ιησουν ουτε Παυλος ετολμεσεν ειπειν Θεον, ουτε Ματθαιος, ουτε Λουκας, ουτε Μαρκος,—αλλ' ὁ χρηςος Ιωαννης.—St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. Mark, though they do not in their own words declare the divinity of Chriſt, yet do ſufficiently ſo by the facts, which they record. To the evidence of facts St. John, who publiſhed his Goſpel after the other Evangeliſts, adds the teſtimony of his own expreſs declaration. Dr. Jortin quotes the paſſage of Julian, (*Tracts*, Vol. I. p. 402.) and at the ſame time remarks the injudiciouſneſs of the Socinian Criticiſm on St. John I. 1.

V.

P. 12. *If in what we conſider as revealed doctrines we are not ſupported by the language of revelation, all acceſſory authority is unavailable.*] Dr. Prieſtley in his letter to Mr. Barnard, ſays, "You think it extraordinary, that I ſhould

" have recourſe to ſuch guides as the Fathers to ſettle my " opinion concerning the doctrine of the Trinity; think- " ing, I ſuppoſe, that the ſtudy of the *ſcriptures* might " render all other helps unneceſſary. Now I have more " than once given my reaſons for this conduct. It is, in " ſhort, this—Chriſtians are not agreed in the interpreta- " tion of *ſcripture language;* but as all men are agreed " with reſpect to the nature of *hiſtorical evidence*, I thought " that we might perhaps better determine by hiſtory what " was the faith of Chriſtians in early times independently " of any aid from the ſcriptures; and it appeared to be no " unnatural preſumption, that whatever *that* ſhould appear " to be, ſuch was the doctrine of the Apoſtles, from whom " that faith was derived."

On this paſſage there are two obvious remarks to be made: (1.) That as much as *hiſtorical evidence*, (that is, the evidence of facts, general perſuaſions, and habits,) is preferable to the evidence of diſputable terms; ſo much contemporary evidence is of weight ſuperior to ſubſequent teſtimony; conſequently that *Goſpel* and *Apoſtolical hiſtory* are the moſt proper evidences of *Goſpel truth*. (2.) That to determine the opinions of the Apoſtles concerning the perſon of Chriſt from the writings of the Fathers without conſulting the writings of the Apoſtles themſelves, is as præ-poſterous as it would be to determine the judgement of Ariſtotle on the modes of legitimate reaſoning and perſua- ſion from his commentators without conſulting the Orga- non and Rhetoric: or to eſtimate the doctrines of Plato, not from his own works, but from the different ſects of the Academy, or the ſtill greater diſcordancies of the Alex- andrine and Athenian Schools.

VI.

P. 11. *ſaid that God was his Father, making himſelf equal with God.*] The teſtimony of the Jews is confirmed by the Apoſtle in his Epiſtle to the Philippians, ii. 6. "Who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be "*equal with God:*" that is, who being in the likeneſs of God, or of the ſame nature with God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, ſine injuria, or, ſuo jure ſibi vindicandam exiſtimavit æqualitatem cum Deo. Mr. Lindſey, (in his *Second Addreſs to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge*, p. 263.) tranſlates the paſſage quoted in the Sermon, "making himſelf *like* unto God;" but does not produce a ſingle inſtance from the Greek Teſtament, or any Greek writer to ſhow that ισος was *ever* uſed in the ſenſe of ſimilitude *without equality*. In the paſſage from the Epiſtle to the Philippians he tranſlates το ειναι ισα θεω *like unto God*. But *likeneſs* to God (εν μορφη θεου ὑπαρχων) is expreſſed in the beginning of the verſe, as the reaſon of Chriſt's το ειναι ισα θεω. So that, if the latter term meant only *ſimilitude* to God, the ſentiment would run thus: "who being in the form of God, that is, in "the *likeneſs* of God, thought it not robbery to be *like* "unto God;" a tautology, which, independently of other reaſons, renders Mr. Lindſey's tranſlation inadmiſſible.

Mr. Lindſey has been unfortunate in the choice of a paſſage, which he has ſelected (p. 263.) for the purpoſe of correcting in his note to the paſſage from St. John before quoted. "Our Tranſlators have fallen into a ſimilar miſ-"take" [ſimilar to their tranſlating ισος, *equal*] "in Luke "xx. 36. where ισαγγελοι ſhould be rendered, not *equal*, "but *like* unto the angels. For it is not an equality to "thoſe heavenly beings in rank and faculties, which our

"Lord here authorizes his virtuous and ſincere follow-
"ers to expect immediately in the future world, at the re-
"ſurrection; but only a more perfect, and unperiſhing
"condition of being." The meaning of ισοι in ισαγγελοι is clearly determined by its ſubject. If they were not to be equal to the Angels in rank and faculties, (about which however the paſſage is totally ſilent,) they *were* to be equal to them in immortality. This "unperiſh-
"ing condition of being" they were to enjoy *equally* with the Angels, and therefore they are called ισαγγελοι: "nei-
"ther can they die any more: for they are equal unto the
"Angels." Whether ισαγγελοι be tranſlated *like* unto the Angels, or *equal*, is immaterial as to the ſenſe; for if they are *like* to the Angels in *infinite* exiſtence, they muſt be equal to them in exiſtence: yet in propriety of terms "*like* unto the Angels" is inadequate to ισαγγελοι: for though all equals are ſimilar, all ſimilars are not equal.

Mr. Lindſey conceives that in the appellation of *the Son of God* there was nothing, which the Jews coud interpret as implying any pretenſion to equality with God, and therefore that they did not ſo underſtand the appellation: but till Mr. Lindſey produces proper examples of ισος in the ſenſe of ſimilitude without equality; and at the ſame time can ſhew, that, when on another occaſion, but on the ſame account, the Jews charged Jeſus with making himſelf *God*, θεον does not mean God; we muſt think Mr. Lindſey more influenced by his previous perſuaſions, than by the natural force of the terms.

VII.

P. 11. *and they all condemned him to be guilty of death.*]—That the reader may better judge of the charge for which

Jeſus Chriſt was condemned to death, I ſhall lay before him the ſeveral paſſages in the Goſpels, which relate to the charge and condemnation.

Math. xxvi. 63—66. "And the high Prieſt anſwered and ſaid unto him; "I adjure thee by the living God, "that thou tell us, whether thou be the Chriſt, the Son of "God. Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thou haſt ſaid; never- "theleſs [*moreover*, πλην] I ſay unto you, Hereafter ſhall "ye ſee the Son of Man ſitting on the right hand of power, "and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high "prieſt rent his clothes, ſaying, He hath ſpoken blaſ- "phemy; what further need have we of witneſſes? "behold, now ye have heard his blaſphemy. What "think ye? They anſwered and ſaid, he is guilty of "death."

Mark, xiv. 61—64. "Again the high prieſt aſked him, "and ſaid unto him, Art thou the Chriſt, the Son of the "Bleſſed? And Jeſus ſaid, I am: and ye ſhall ſee the Son "of Man ſitting on the right hand of power, and coming "in the clouds of heaven. Then the high prieſt rent his "clothes, and ſaith, what need we any further witneſſes? "Ye have heard the blaſphemy: what think ye? and "they all condemned him to be guilty of death."

Luke, xxii. 66—71. "And as ſoon as it was day, the "elders of the people, and the chief prieſts and the ſcribes "came together, and led him into their council, ſaying, "Art thou the Chriſt? tell us. And he ſaid unto them, "If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I alſo aſk you, "you will not anſwer me, nor let me go. Hereafter ſhall "the Son of Man ſit on the right hand of the power of "God. Then ſaid they all, Art thou then the Son of "God? And he ſaid unto them, Ye ſay that I am. And

" they ſaid, What need we any further witneſs, for we " ourſelves have heard of his own mouth."

John, xix. 6, 7. " When the chief prieſts therefore " and officers ſaw him, they cried out, ſaying, Crucify " him, crucify him. Pilate ſaith unto them, Take ye " him, and crucify him; for I find no fault in him. The " Jews anſwered him, We have a law, and by our law " he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of " God."

Dr. Prieſtley ſays in his Hiſtory of the Chriſtian Church (Vol. I. p. 21.) that at the time of the trial " not know- " ing, what charge to bring againſt him, on which they " coud ſentence him to death, his judges haſtily took up " *blaſphemy*, accuſing him of ſpeaking lightly of the Tem- " ple, which they might think was likely to deſtroy his " intereſt with the common people. But not being able to " prove this charge, the high prieſt, who preſided in the " Court, ſolemnly aſked him, whether he was the Meſſiah; " and upon his acknowledging it, the majority of them " voted his death, on the idea of his having arrogated to " himſelf a high office from God, which did not belong to " him."

There is in this paſſage a miſtatement of important circumſtances, which does not appear conſiſtent with the conduct of an exact and impartial hiſtorian. Jeſus Chriſt was not accuſed of ſpeaking lightly of the Temple by his *Judges*, but by ſuborned *witneſſes:* he was not accuſed of *blaſphemy* for " ſpeaking lightly of the Temple," but for calling himſelf *the Son of God:* the charge of blaſphemy was not taken up " haſtily," but after *repeated declarations* that he was the Son of God, confirmed by his avowal of the ſame declaration to the high Prieſt at his trial: and it

appeared from the ſenſe in which the Jews underſtood his previous declarations, that they conſidered his aſſuming to himſelf the title of the Son of God, not merely as pretending to "a high office from God," but as profeſſing to be *God*, and *equal with God*.

VIII.

P. 12. In the view, which I have given of Chriſt's teſtimony of himſelf, I have conſidered the appellation of *the Son of God* as the charge for which he was condemned to death; and therefore as a ſure foundation of our belief in the divinity of Chriſt. Dr. Price, in his excellent ſermon on the præexiſtence and ſuperhumanity of Chriſt, thinks that the *mere* appellation of the Son of God, as applied to Chriſt, decides nothing on the ſubject; and though he concurs ſo far with the believers in the divinity of Chriſt, as to think that *the Socinian doctrine is not conſiſtent with Chriſtianity*; yet he conſiders himſelf bound, as a candid enquirer after truth, to lay no ſtreſs on this appellation, as an argument for Chriſt's ſuperhumanity. Dr. Price relinquiſhed the argument, becauſe he thought it of no weight; on the contrary, it forces itſelf on my apprehenſion, when fully examined, as the great fundamental proof of our Lord's divinity: and perhaps Dr. Price would have judged very differently of it, if he had purſued the argument in all its circumſtances.

It is not the *mere* appellation of the Son of God, as applied to Chriſt by *others*, on which the ſtreſs deſerves to be laid, but the appellation, as it was aſſumed by *himſelf*, and underſtood by the *Jews*. They conſidered his pretenſion to the title, as blaſphemy, and at laſt condemned him to death for it. But in what did this blaſphemy conſiſt? In

the more general ſenſe of the words, it coud not be conſidered as blaſphemy; for the Jews called themſelves ſons of God, and God their common Father: it coud not be as a prophet; for he was conſidered by the generality of the Jews, as a great Prophet, and as ſuch he was entitled to the name of the Son of God in an eminent degree. It muſt therefore have been in a ſenſe, which had never before been applied to Man, and was compatible only with that *great perſon* ſo long predicted by their Prophets. That Jeſus Chriſt meant, under the title of the Son of God, to repreſent himſelf as the Meſſiah, the Chriſt, is admitted by all, who call themſelves Chriſtians, as well as by the Jews who condemned him to the Croſs. His blaſphemy therefore conſiſted in calling himſelf the Meſſiah. But what was the extent of the blaſphemy? The Socinians ſay, that Jeſus Chriſt never profeſſed himſelf to be more than Man, and that the imputed blaſphemy did not imply any pretenſion to divinity; but merely the aſſumption of a certain great office and commiſſion from God, which the Jews conſidered him as an impoſtor: and they allege in favour of this aſſertion, the common expectations of the Jews, who looked only for a great temporal deliverer.—In anſwer to this allegation we may reply, that (were it true, that the Jews expected *only* a *temporal* deliverer) the *expectations* of the *Jews* cannot be made the rule of OUR *belief*. Predictions are never properly underſtood, till they are accompliſhed. Our belief therefore of Jeſus Chriſt is not to be regulated by the *Jews'* expectations of the Meſſiah, or *their* opinions of Jeſus Chriſt; but by HIS profeſſions of *himſelf*.

Now from theſe profeſſions, in the many paſſages, where Chriſt ſpeaks of God as his Father, in the moſt marked

and appropriate relation, the obvious inference is, that the appellation of the Son of God, aſſumed by him, implies the ſame kind of relation to God, as that of a Man to his Father: that is, it implies coeſſentiality with God, and therefore equality of nature, and conſequently divinity in its full extent. Such, I ſay, appears to be the obvious inference: but, thanks to the Evangelical Hiſtorians, we are not left to a mere preſumptive inference. For we have the expreſs atteſtation of his living witneſſes the Jews, to what they conſidered as his meaning: they repeatedly charged him with blaſphemy for making himſelf *equal with God*,—*one with God*,—and *God*: and at laſt condemned him to death for his blaſphemy by virtue of the Levitical law.

The Jews, indeed, as his enemies, might have exaggerated the charge againſt him. But Chriſt knew, in what ſenſe they underſtood the appellation, which he aſſumed; and by his acquieſcence admitted the truth of their allegations. If they had miſunderſtood his pretenſions, he had many opportunities of undeceiving them, and no doubt would have undeceived them,—not, to prevent his death; (for to that end he knew that he came into the world,) but, (what in his opinion, to conſider him only as the beſt of all juſt Men, muſt have been of much greater conſequence,)—to prevent the propagation of an error, which his acquieſcence in their charge coud not fail to eſtabliſh. Yet inſtead of correcting their opinions he confirmed the charge by repeating his aſſertions, and ſubmitting to the ſentence, which the Levitical law paſſed on him for calling himſelf the Son of God. Therefore, if we admit in any degree the truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, and believe that Chriſt "came into the world, that he ſhould bear witneſs "unto the truth," we muſt believe him to have been

what he profeſſed himſelf to be, *the Son of God*, in that literal ſenſe, which his living witneſſes imputed to thoſe terms, and which he admitted by his acquieſcence, that is, *God, equal with God* and *one with God*.

IX.

P. 19. *that if we aſk any thing in his name, HE will do it*] Our Saviour's words are, "If ye ſhall aſk any thing in "my name, I will do it." On another occaſion he ſaid, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, "there am I in the midſt of them." (Matth. xviii. 20.) It is on the ground of theſe aſſurances, that St. John ſays in his firſt Epiſtle, v. 14, 15. "And this is the confidence "that we have in him, that if we aſk any thing according "to HIS will, HE heareth us. And if we know, that "he hear us, whatſoever we aſk, we know that we have "the petitions, that we deſired of him." Nothing can ſhew more clearly and expreſsly than theſe paſſages, that Chriſt is the proper object of our prayers, and that he was ſo conſidered by St. John. They ſerve too as a collateral proof of our Saviour's declaration of his divinity. For nothing leſs than God can be the proper object of our adorations; therefore when Chriſt aſſures us that HE will be preſent to all our ſupplications, and that HE will perform our petitions, he encourages and directs us to addreſs our prayers to him, as well as to the Father; and therefore declares himſelf God, as unequivocally as by any appellation the moſt expreſſive of divinity.

X.

P. 26. § 2.] Dr. Prieſtley tells the inhabitants of Birmingham, that they ſhould not ſuffer the authority of their

clergy to direct their opinions in Religion; and that nothing is so easy as to understand the most important questions relating to Religion. "You are told that there are many "*deep mysteries* in Religion, and therefore that your clergy "must teach you what to *think*, or rather what to *say* "about them. But be persuaded to think better of your- "selves and of your own understandings. These things "are not in reality of so difficult a nature as many things "in your common trades and businesses. The most im- "portant questions relating to religion are the plainest "things in the world, and require nothing but a common "understanding, honestly applied, to comprehend them." (*Familiar Letters addressed to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*, Part III. p. 22.)—Nothing would be more easy, if they would trust implicitly to Dr. Priestley; and these *argumenta ad vulgus* wear too flattering and seducing an aspect not to have some weight with them. But if they study their Bible, they will read of *the deep things of God*, and *the great mystery of godliness*; and that in the Scriptures *there are many things hard to be understood, which the* unlearned *and the* unstable *wrest to their own destruction*: and if they attentively consider our Saviour's conversation with Nathanael, they will find that however simple and easy of acceptation divine truths are, as objects of *belief*, yet when opposed by prejudice or self-conceit, they present many difficulties not only to the unlearned but the learned. Indeed if they read their Bible for themselves, and then see how much Dr. Priestley and other Socinians differ from all other denominations of dissenters, as well as from the national Church, they will find sufficient reason to distrust their own judgements, and, perhaps, to think that they will gain nothing by changing their confidence in their old Teachers.

The learning, the ardour, the indignation which have been oppoſed, from ſo many quarters, to Dr. Prieſtley's attempts to undermine that great article of our Religion, the divinity of Chriſt, would ſhew them, (if they had leiſure to attend to the many valuable tracts, which the Controverſy has produced,) how little reliance is due to Dr. Prieſtley's confident aſſertions, and pertinacious challenges to his opponents: and the great oppoſition of ſentiment between the learned parties in diſpute would probably teach his unlearned readers more humility of mind than is expedient for Dr. Prieſtley's views of reformation.

Dr. Price ſays that the doctrines of Dr. Prieſtley reſpecting the perſon of Chriſt render the Scriptures unintelligible, and Chriſtianity itſelf incredible: and that his doctrines cannot be ſupported without torturing the Scriptures, or renouncing their authority. Dr. Prieſtley ſays that Dr. Price's doctrines are ſo improbable, as greatly to impede the progreſs of Chriſtianity.—Mr. Hawkins is aſtoniſhed, that an ingenious and enlightened mind ſhould be influenced by ſuch baneful prepoſſeſſion, as marks Dr. Prieſtley's groundleſs and partial objections to the doctrines of the national Church. Dr. Prieſtley is as much aſtoniſhed, that any perſon with a mind ſo enlightened as Mr. Hawkins's ſhould not perceive the futility of his reaſoning in favour of the Church doctrines, and how much he has expoſed the cauſe, which he undertook to defend.—The Biſhop of St. David's aſcribes Dr. Prieſtley's rejection of the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity on the authority of the Fathers to his ignorance of the learned languages, his deficiency in the knowledge of Chriſtian Antiquity, and his general incompetency to the ſubject, which he pretends to treat. Dr. Prieſtley retorts the charge of deficiency and

incompetency on his antagoniſt: and, though a party in the diſpute, without waiting for the deciſion of the public, pronounces, "that there is hardly an example in the whole "hiſtory of Controverſy, of any man having made ſo poor "a figure as his antagoniſt has done in this."

When men of ſuch acknowledged abilities differ ſo widely in their opinions, how ſhall the unlearned Chriſtian decide? How ſhall he be able, after making all the allowable deductions of prejudice, ſelf-intereſt, &c. to compute the probabilities of right judgement.—There is indeed one rule, which may be of ſervice to him, and is not undeſerving the attention of Dr. Prieſtley,—that when all denominations of Chriſtians, (except Socinians) however partial to their peculiar tenets, concur with Dr. Price in conſidering Dr. Prieſtley's opinions concerning Jeſus Chriſt to be inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity, there is every probability, that *they* are right in their judgement of his opinions, and that *Dr. Prieſtley* and his Socinian followers are wrong.

XI.

P. 34. § 2. *to controvert even the authority of Scripture, where it does not accord with their own judgement*] "So "ſtrange and incredible does your Hypotheſis, [the præ-"exiſtence of Chriſt] appear to me, that rather than admit "it, I would ſuppoſe the whole verſe [*what and if ye ſhall "ſee the Son of Man aſcend up where he was before*] to be "an interpolation, or that the old Apoſtle dictated one "thing, and his amanuenſis wrote another." Dr. Prieſtley's Letters to Dr. Price, p. 58. in his *Defences of Unitarianiſm for the year* 1787.——"As it is not pretended, "that there are any miracles adapted to prove that Chriſt "made and ſupports the world, I do not ſee, that we are

" under any obligation to believe it *merely becauſe it was an* " *opinion held by an Apoſtle.*" Dr. Prieſtley's " Hiſtory of " Early Opinions concerning Chriſt," Vol. I. p. 63.— And yet Dr. Prieſtley (in his Letters to Mr. Burn, p. 2. 5.) ſays that the charge, which has been brought againſt him of *undervaluing*, and *rejecting* the *authority of the Scriptures* is " contrary to fact and all appearance of fact," and calls it " a groſs and unfounded calumny."

XII.

P. 34. § 3. Creeds are the grammars and elements of religion. Such compendiums of doctrines are uſeful to all conditions of Chriſtians, but are abſolutely neceſſary for the inſtruction of the poor and the unlearned. Creeds and Catechetical expoſitions have been among the principal human means of preſerving the Faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints. It is no wonder therefore that thoſe who diſſent from the eſtabliſhment, or diſbelieve the doctrines, of a particular Church, ſhould make theſe bulwarks of eſtabliſhed doctrines, the main object of their attack.

The Athanaſian Creed is charged with want of Charity: but I think on miſtaken grounds. It is not the writer of the Creed, nor the Church, nor the Miniſter, nor the Communicants, who accompany him in the ſervice, that denounce condemnation againſt unbelievers in the Catholic faith: they pronounce the ſentence of Scripture, not their own wills, or wiſhes.—But objectors ſay, that the Athanaſian doctrine is not the doctrine of Scripture, and therefore that the damnatory ſentence againſt the diſbelief of this doctrine is not the ſentence of Scripture.—When objectors to the *uncharitable* ſpirit of the damnatory clauſes urge this, they deſert the ground of their objection. Whe-

ther the Athanaſian ſentence be, or be not the ſentence of Scripture, is a queſtion of *fact*, and not of *charity*. It is ſufficient in the latter reſpect, if they, who pronounce the ſentence, believe it to have the authority of Scripture.

If the damnatory clauſes be conſidered in the light which, I think, they ought to be, as ſcriptural admonitions, rather than denunciations by the Church, or the Miniſter, or the Communicant, it will appear that the objection to their uncharitable ſpirit is levelled more at the particular caſe than the general principle; more at the particular doctrine, which theſe clauſes are intended to guard, than at the mode of guarding it; and ſometimes (it is not improbable) more at the particular eſtabliſhment, which profeſſes the doctrine, than at the doctrine itſelf. We may try it by the uſual applications of any other great rule of Scripture. For inſtance, Chriſtian faith and Chriſtian charity are equally neceſſary to our ſalvation: and we may pronounce without any uncharitable bigotry, that "whoever will be "ſaved, muſt live in charity with his neighbour." Dr. Prieſtley ſays of one of his opponents, (Fam. Letters, p. 139.) that "he is in a ſtate of mind, which diſqualifies "him for receiving forgiveneſs from God or Man:" reſting his declaration, as it ſhould ſeem, on the ſame rule, which regulates the Athanaſian ſentence, the rule of Scripture. In making this declaration Dr. Prieſtley, no doubt, did not think himſelf guilty of any breach of Chriſtian charity; yet it is expreſſed in terms full as deciſive, and more comprehenſive, than the Athanaſian clauſes: and ſhews, I think, indiſputably, that the opponents of the damnatory clauſes may object (more than they are aware) to the particular caſe inſtead of the general principle.

Chriſt has paſſed an unequivocal ſentence of condemnation on unbelief: and the Chriſtian Church from the earlieſt ages of Chriſtianity believed the doctrine of the Trinity to be the true Chriſtian faith; and of courſe that unbelievers in the Trinity are obnoxious to our Saviour's denunciation. God is indeed a God of infinite mercy; and we know not how far he may extend his mercy and forgiveneſs: but there does not appear from Revelation any authority to mitigate the declared judgements of our Saviour. If then the doctrine of the Athanaſian Creed be the true faith, and the denial of the truth be liable to the ſentence paſſed by our Saviour on unbelievers, there can be no want of charity in pronouncing the public admonitions in the Creed to remind Chriſtians of the danger of unbelief.

I will not add to the length of this note by intrenching on an inquiry, which will be the ſubject of a future Diſcourſe; but will content myſelf with obſerving, that whatever influence Church-eſtabliſhments may appear to have on the minds of their communicants, it ſhould be remembered that ſome of the moſt learned and zealous aſſertors of the doctrine of the Trinity, ſuch as Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, lived long before any civil eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity: (Origen lived a century before Conſtantine and the Council of Nice; Cyprian ſomewhat leſs than a century, but Tertullian conſiderably more:) and that two of them were not adherents to the opinions of their Fathers, but were converts from Idolatry; from the prevailing religion of the world; in a period, which left them no hopes of ſecurity againſt their heathen enemies, but the precarious indulgence of heathen magiſtrates; and certainly held out no temptations to pervert their underſtandings, or delude their judgements. See NOTE XVI.

XIII.

P. 37. *without having any ſettled opinions of our own*] "I ſhall not be offended, (ſays Dr. Prieſtley in his Letters "to Dr. Price) if you account for my *roving from one opi-* "*nion to another* by ſuppoſing that I have a temper of "mind too *hoſtile to every thing that is eſtabliſhed*; or if "you ſhould ſay that I am more apt to be ſatisfied with "any thing belonging to myſelf than with my opinions, "and that I am *not likely to fix long in any ſcheme*. Certain "it is that ſo far from having much fondneſs for the opi-"nions that I received from my education, I have gone "on changing, though always in *one direction*, from the "time that I began to think for myſelf to the preſent day, "and *I will not pretend to ſay, when my creed will be fixed*." —How an inquiring mind may be led to embrace the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, in direct oppoſition to the progreſs of Dr. Prieſtley's mind, the reader may ſee very ſtrikingly ſhewn, in Dr. Horſley's *Tracts*, p. 280, &c.

XIV.

P. 40. *The moſt defective repreſentations of Church Hiſtory*] I ſay the moſt defective, becauſe defective in eſſential circumſtances, and partial, becauſe conſiſtent with the opinions of one part only, and that much the ſmalleſt part of thoſe, who profeſs themſelves to be Chriſtians. It might have been expected from an Hiſtorian of the Chriſtian Church, that in his account of the origin of the Chriſtian Religion, he would not have omitted *any very* diſtinguiſhing particulars relating to the perſonal character and authority of its founder.—But Dr. Prieſtley has omitted the *moſt* diſtinguiſhing particulars in the life and converſation of Jeſus

Chriſt: he ſays nothing of the extraordinary circumſtances of his birth, nothing of his many diſcourſes with the Jews and his diſciples reſpecting himſelf and his commiſſion; and has miſrepreſented the nature of the charge, on which, he was condemned to the Croſs. The miraculous conception ſhews that Jeſus Chriſt had no human father; yet Dr. Prieſtley calls him the Son of Joſeph, and ſays nothing of his birth.—To encourage and direct his diſciples to offer their prayers to him as well as to the Father, by aſſuring them that HE would be always preſent to their ſupplications, and would perform their petitions, is to aſſume to himſelf the power and authority of God, and yet Dr. Prieſtley ſays nothing of a circumſtance ſo declarative of Chriſt's perſonal character.---To forgive ſins in his own name belongs to God only: but Jeſus Chriſt forgave ſins in his own name, and the Jews charged him with blaſphemy for ſo doing; yet Dr. Prieſtley is ſilent about this extraordinary exertion of authority. Theſe are circumſtances which tend eſſentially to develope the character, pretenſions, and authority of Chriſt, and to lead us to a true knowledge of him; and therefore ought not to have been omitted by an accurate and impartial Hiſtorian, how much ſoever in his private ſentiments, he might differ from the general belief of Chriſtians.

XV.

P. 41. *ſeditious appeals to the paſſions of the people*] Whatever writings have a tendency to create diſaffection to the ſubſiſting government of any country, may be juſtly deemed ſeditious, though their intended effects may be defeated both by the weakneſs of their arguments, and the temper of the times. The Eccleſiaſtical government of this Coun-

try is an eſſential part of the great national Syſtem eſtabliſhed at the Revolution: Yet Dr. Prieſtley has always avowed his enmity to our Eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, and his moſt ſtrenuous endeavours for its demolition. But though the aſperity of his cenſures, the ardour of his wiſhes, and the confidence of his predictions, be levelled chiefly againſt the *Church* of England, yet he acknowledges, that he would willingly ſee the *whole* eſtabliſhed government of his Country ſubverted for the ſake of removing the "Corruptions "of Chriſtianity," which it ſupports. "It is nothing but "the *alliance* of the kingdom of Chriſt with the kingdoms "of this world (an alliance which our Lord himſelf ex- "preſsly diſclaimed) that ſupports the groſſeſt corruptions "of Chriſtianity; and perhaps we muſt wait for *the fall* "*of the Civil powers*, before this moſt unnatural alliance "can be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time "be. But what convulſion in the political world ought to "be a ſubject of lamentation, if it be attended with ſo de- "ſirable an event. May the *kingdom of God* and of Chriſt "(that which I conceive to be intended in the Lord's "prayer) truly and fully come, though all the kingdoms "of the world be removed in order to make way for it." (*Hiſtory of the Corruptions of Chriſtianity*, in the Concluſion.) To this paſſage may be added the following from Biſhop Horſley's REMARKS (P. II. Ch. VI.) on *the general Spirit of Dr. Prieſtley's Controverſial writings*. "In his *View of the principles and conduct of the Proteſtant* "*Diſſenters, with reſpect to the civil and eccleſiaſtical con-* "*ſtitution of England*, a pamphlet firſt publiſhed in the "year 1769, after a picture, highly exaggerated, I hope, "of certain abuſes among the Clergy; which he refers to "the principles of the hierarchy, but which, ſo far as they

" are real, are eaſily traced to very different cauſes; he, in " the true ſpirit of patriotiſm, points out the remedy. His " ſalutary advice is conveyed in the form of a prediction. " He foretells, that in " ſome general convulſion of the " ſtate," ſuch as he might hope our diſputes with the Ame- " rican colonies, which were then viſibly tending to an " open rupture, might, in no long time, produce: " ſome " bold hand, ſecretly impelled by a vengeful Providence, " ſhall ſweep down the whole together." In later publica- " tions he diſcovers no averſion, to be himſelf the hand " employed in that vindictive buſineſs; although his indiſ- " cretion, which he avows, and which ſeems indeed to be " very great, when the glorious proſpect of ſtate convul- " ſions warms and elevates his patriotic mind, ſhould render " him, it may be thought, unfit to have a part in the exe- " cution of a project, in which the ſucceſs may at all de- " pend on ſecreſy." TRACTS, p. 403.

Such violent declarations as are contained in the paſſages of Dr. Prieſtley quoted and alluded to, ſavour too much of that intemperate reſentment, which our Saviour condemned in his diſciples, who would have called down fire from heaven on the Samaritans for not receiving him into their village. " But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not " what manner of ſpirit ye are of. For the Son of Man " is not come to deſtroy Men's lives, but to ſave them."— Political experience is in direct oppoſition to the ſentiments of Dr. Prieſtley reſpecting the deſirableneſs of public commotions: and ſhould convince us that it is dangerous to inculcate principles ſubverſive of public order; and to diſſeminate complaints amongſt a people ſatisfied with the ſubſtantial bleſſings, which they enjoy: that the *rights of man* are fearful inſtruments in the hands of a mob;—and that

when occaſions are given to commotions, convulſioniſts themſelves cannot always calculate their direction or event.

If however the *extinction* of thoſe religious doctrines, ſuch as the divinity of Chriſt, which Dr. Prieſtley conſiders as Corruptions of Chriſtianity, are worth ſo great a ſacrifice, as the ſubverſion of the preſent eſtabliſhment and the downfall of the powers that be:—it will follow, on the contrary ſuppoſition, that, if the doctrines in queſtion are the doctrines of truth revealed from God, which we of the Church of England believe them to be; and if all men of every rank and condition have an equal intereſt in the truth; the *poſſeſſion* of theſe truths deſerves, *at the leaſt*, (for ſuch *protection* falls infinitely ſhort of Dr. Prieſtley's means of *extinction*,) to be protected from violation and corruption by the moſt effectual proviſions, which the civil authority of a free Chriſtian country can afford.

XVI.

P. 29. *without the influence of worldly motives, without hypocriſy, without inſanity.*] "The Adverſaries of Luther "might have ſaid to him, we muſt have a creed, and this "creed may contain errors. But it is better that it ſhould "be ſo, than that we ſhould have no creed at all; and as "to thoſe, who cannot ſubſcribe to it, let them leave the "Church, and the emoluments of it to thoſe, who can." "But who then, Gentlemen, would be left in it? Not "the inquiſitive, or the conſcientious, but as many of the "unthinking, the diſhoneſt, and unbelievers, as could get "into it." Dr. Prieſtley's *Letters to the Candidates for orders in the two Univerſities*, p. 123. in his *Defences of Unitarianiſm* for 1787.——"I now ſee that there is ſome-"thing in the Church of England, which has more power

" than I was aware of, to blind the eyes of Men, in other " reſpects honeſt and ingenuous; and to produce a degree " of *ſelf-deluſion* almoſt equal to any thing, that we ſee in " *Bedlam*. This makes me thankful to God, that my " ſituation and circumſtances have been different from " yours. For I am far from thinking that either my *un-* " *derſtanding*, or my *heart* is naturally better than yours. " But what muſt we think of a *ſyſtem*, which has ſuch " power of perverting the beſt faculties and diſpoſitions " that God has given to man! Let all thoſe, who are " happily out of the influence of its faſcination join in the " moſt ardent prayers, and the moſt earneſt, but peaceable " endeavours, for the *demolition* of it." Dr. Prieſtley's *Letters to Mr. Hawkins*, in his *Defences of Unitarianiſm* for the years 1788 and 1789.

XVII.

P. 29. *intereſts, which by many analogies appear to be intimately connected with the proſperity of the whole national eſtabliſhment*] The arguments advanced by the Diſſenters for the Repeal of the *Corporation* and *Teſt Acts*, thoſe bulwarks of our civil and religious liberties, (as Blackſtone calls them, and as they have been repeatedly declared to be, by the national Legiſlature, but never ſo fully and deciſively, as in the laſt Parliament,) proceed on principles inconſiſtent with the ſyſtem of national government eſtabliſhed at the Revolution, becauſe on principles ſtrictly democratical; and adverſe to all permanency of civil government, becauſe founded on *natural* claims ſuperſeded by the rights of *civil* polity.

THE END.

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